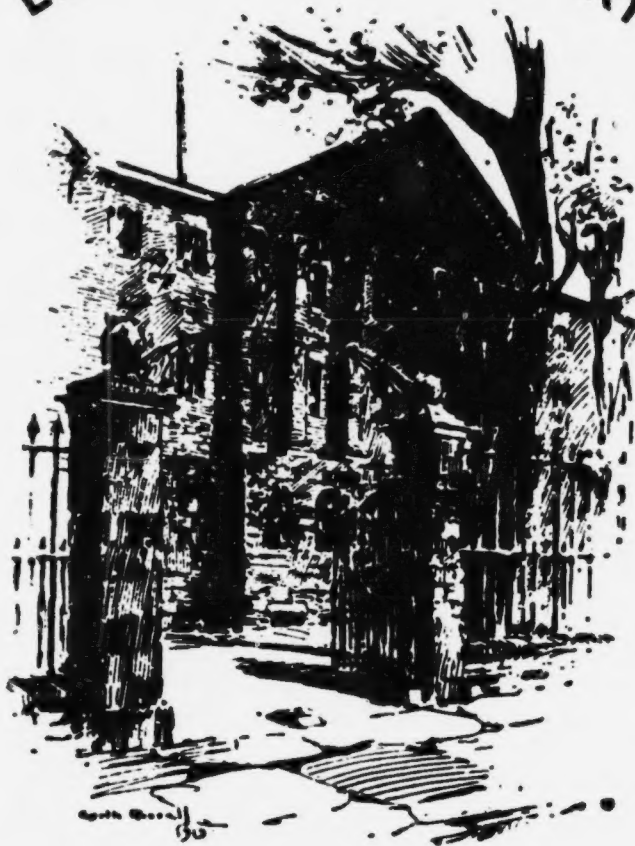


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DECLARATION

OF THE

FAITH, PRACTICE, & COVENANT

OF THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

COMPOSING

THE NOVA-SCOTIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

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A DECLARATION
OF THE
FAITH, PRACTICE, & COVENANT,
OF THE
Churches of Christ

COMPOSING
THE NOVA-SCOTIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

ARTICLE 1.—There is but one only living and true God, who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Deut. vi. 4; John iv. 24; Psal. xc. 2; Jer. x. 10; Isa. vi. 3; Exodus xxiv. 6, 7.

2. There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are but one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. 1 John v. 7; Mat. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 2; Rev. i. 4, 5; 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14; Tit. iii. 4—6.

3. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the word of God, in which he hath given us our only rule of faith and practice. 2 Tim. iii. 15—17; John v. 39.

4. God, who is infinite in knowledge, and perfectly views all things from the beginning to the end, hath foreordained that whatsoever comes to pass, either by his order or permission, shall work for the eternal glory of his great name. Acts xv. 18; Rom. ix. 17—23; xi. 36; Acts ii. 23; Ephes. i. 11.

5. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them are; and he upholds and governs all things by the word of his power. Gen. i. 1; Exod. xx. 11; Heb. i. 3; Daniel iv. 35.

6. God made man in his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and made with him a covenant of life, the condition of which was perfect obedience. Gen. i. 26, 27; ii. 16, 17.

7. Man being left to himself, soon fell from that happy and glorious estate, in which he was made, by eating the forbidden fruit, by which he brought himself and all his posterity into a state of death. Gen. iii. 6; Rom. v. 12—19.

8. Man being thus dead, his help and recovery are wholly in and from God. Hos. xiii. 9; Eph. ii. 8; John vi. 44.

9. God the Father hath chosen a great multitude of the human family, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, and given them to his Son in the covenant of grace, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; which is the only foundation of salvation for lost and helpless sinners: and thereby the ministers of the Lord are encouraged to preach the gospel to every rational creature; because, the purpose of God, and the infinite value of Christ's atonement, secure the increase and establishment of Christ's kingdom, so that the kingdoms of this

world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rom. viii. 29, 30; Eph. i. 4, 5; John vi. 37—39; Rev. vii. 9; Titus ii. 14; Mark xvi. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Mat. xiii. 33; Rev. xi. 15.

10. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, hath come, and taken on him our nature, and in that nature hath yielded a perfect obedience to the law which we have transgressed, and suffered death for our sins, and hath brought in a complete and everlasting righteousness, and hath risen and ascended to the right hand of God, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Heb. x. 5—10; Dan. ix. 24; Heb. vii. 25.

11. The Holy Ghost, and he only, can and doth make particular application of the benefits of the atonement made by Christ to every elect soul. John iii. 5—8; xvi. 7—15.

12. The Spirit of God applies the benefits of this atonement, by convincing us of our sinful, lost, and miserable condition; and then discovering the glorious Saviour, as he is exhibited in the gospel, in his suitableness and sufficiency, and enabling us to embrace him with our whole souls, by which he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. John xvi. 8; 1 Cor. i. 30.

13. The life of religion consists in the knowledge of God, and conformity with him in the inward man, which necessarily produces an external conformity to his commands, and brings us to live in obedience to his holy will in all our ways, and in our several places and relations. John xvii. 3; Mat. xxiii. 23—26; Eph. ii. 10; Tit. ii. 11—14.

14. True believers, being united to Jesus Christ, shall never perish, but live and reign with him for ever. They have communion with God, and by his Spirit they are united

with each other, and have communion one with another, whereby they are made partakers of each other's gifts and graces. John iii. 15, 16; x. 28; Rom. viii. 17; Rev. iii. 21; 1 John i. 3; Rom. i. 11; Phil. i. 7.

15. The first day of the week, commonly called the Lord's Day, is the Christian Sabbath. Mark ii. 27, 28; Mat. xxviii. 1—6; John xx. 19; Rev. i. 10; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

16. God hath appointed the ordinance of civil government for defending the poor as well as the rich, in their civil rights, without infringing upon the consciences of any, or attempting to dictate or govern in the worship of the eternal God, which belongs only to Jesus Christ the great Lawgiver and Head of his church. Rom. xiii. 1—4; 1 Pet. ii. 13—15; Luke xxii. 25, 26; Eph. i. 22.

17. There will be a general resurrection, both of the just and unjust, and God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ; and will reward every man according to his works; and when the wicked shall be sent away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous received into life eternal. John v. 28, 29; Rom. ii. 16; xiv. 10—12; Mat. xvi. 27; xxv. 46; 2 Cor. v. 10; Heb. ix. 27, 28; Rev. xx. 12, 13.

PART THE SECOND.

CONCERNING A VISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST, AND ITS DISCIPLINE.

1. A particular visible church of Christ, is a number of his saints, by mutual acquaintance and communion voluntarily and understandingly covenanting and embodying together, for upholding and promoting the worship and service of God, to show forth his declarative glory, and for their own edification. 1 Pet. ii. 5; 1 Cor. i. 2; Acts ii. 42—47.

2. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming, and the former is requisite to the latter; that is to say, those are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to partake of all its ordinances and privileges, who, upon profession of their faith, have been baptized, that is immersed, in the name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—26; Acts ii. 41, 42; ix. 18—26; viii. 12, 36, 39; Mat. iii. 6—16; Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12; John iii. 23; Acts viii. 36—39.

3. Since none but true believers can rightly partake of the ordinances, therefore the door of the church should be carefully kept against all such as cannot give scriptural evidence of their union with Christ. 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29; Mat. vii. 6, 15—20; 1 Peter ii. 5.

4. A church thus gathered has power to choose, and by elders to ordain those officers that Christ hath appointed in his church, viz.—Bishops or Elders, and Deacons; and also to depose such as walk contrary to the rules of the gospel; and to discipline their members, though in some such cases

it may be convenient and profitable to request the advice of neighbouring churches of Christ. Acts i. 21—26 ; vi. 3—6 ; Mat. xviii. 15—18 ; Acts xv. 1—31 ; 1 Cor. v. 1—3 ; Rom. xvi. 17 ; 1 Thess. v. 14 ; 2 Thess. iii. 6.

5. A Bishop or Elder hath no more power to decide any case or controversy in the church than any private brother ; yet they having superior gifts for teaching and ruling, ought to exercise and improve the same for the benefit of the church ; and the church ought to be subject to the gifts bestowed on the minister from the Lord, while he is rightly administering in his place, whose place it is to lead in the actings of the church, and to administer the ordinances of the gospel, and to devote himself to the work of teaching, warning, rebuking, and exhorting the people, publicly, and from house to house. Mat. xx. 25—29 ; 1 Pet. v. 3 ; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20 ; Acts xx. 20, 28, 31 ; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13 ; Heb. xiii. 17.

6. The Deacon's office or work is to take care of the poor, and to have the oversight of the temporal affairs of the church, and to minister at the Lord's table. Acts. vi. 1—5 ; 1 Tim. iii. 8—14.

7. Every believer is commanded to be faithful to improve every gift and talent which is bestowed on him ; in order to which, there ought to be such a gospel freedom that the church may know where every particular gift is, that it may be improved in its proper place, and to its right end, viz. the glory of God and the good of his people ; and the church ought to be subject to such improvements. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11 ; v. 5 ; 1 Tim. iv. 14 ; 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. chapters ; Rom. xii. 4—8 ; Ephes. iv. 7—13.

8. There is a mutual obligation between minister and

people: the former, to administer in things religious and spiritual, according to the gifts God has given; the latter, to communicate of their temporal or worldly substance for his comfort and support, and that by an equality, as nearly as can be ascertained, that one may not be burthened and another eased. But this is not to be effected by force or compulsion, or by the sword of civil power; but it is to be a free-will offering, agreeably to the Scriptures of truth.

And every member deficient in this matter ought to be disciplined by gospel rule, as for any other breach of covenant, or neglect of performing christian duty. 2 Cor. viii. 12—14; Luke x. 7; Rom. xv. 27; 1 Cor. ix. 1—14; Gal. vi. 6.

THE COVENANT.

We do now, in the presence of the great, all-seeing, and most glorious God, and before angels and men, give up ourselves to the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and avouch Him this day to be our God, our Father, our Saviour, and our Leader, and receive him as our portion forever.

We give up ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and engage to adhere to him as the Head of his people in the covenant of grace, and rely on him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, to bring us to eternal blessedness.

We acknowledge our everlasting and indispensable obligations to glorify God, by living a holy, righteous and godly life, in this present world, in all our several places and relations; and we engage by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to improve our time, strength, talents, and advantages, to his glory and the good of our fellow-men; promising, by

Divine help, to walk in our houses as becomes those professing godliness, and to maintain the worship of God in our families, and to train up those under our care in the ways of religion and virtue.

We also give up ourselves to one another in covenant, promising to conduct ourselves towards each other as brethren in Christ, watching over one another in the love of God, (*reproving, rebuking, and admonishing one another for good, as occasion may require; and if we at any time know that any of the members of the church are guilty of immoral conduct, we will not expose them by tattling to others, but will faithfully labour with them, according to the direction of our Lord. Mat. xvii. 15—17, that sin may be put away from among us, and that iniquity may not be harbored in the church*) and to watch not only against the most gross evils, but also against all foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient; vain disputing about words and things, which gender strife; disregarding promises, and not fulfilling engagements; tattling and backbiting, spending time idly at taverns or elsewhere, and vain and unnecessary conversation on the Lord's day, and whatsoever else is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of Christ, promising to hold communion together in the worship of God, and in the ordinances and discipline of his church, according as we are or shall be guided by the Spirit of God, in his word; expecting that he will further and more gloriously open his word and the mysteries of his kingdom; applying to the blood of the everlasting covenant for the pardon of our many errors, and praying the Lord to prepare and strengthen us for every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

